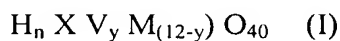


IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claim 1 (Currently Amended): A process for the oxidation of hydrogen sulfide, comprising:

a) contacting a gas ~~containing~~ comprising H₂S with an aqueous acid solution ~~of~~ comprising trivalent iron and ~~containing~~ a hetero polyacid having redox properties, as such or partially salified with an alkaline metal or with ammonium, said polyacid represented by ~~selected from those having general~~ formula (I):



wherein

n is an integer ranging from 3 to 6,

X is an element selected from the group consisting of P, Si, As, B, and Ge,

y is an integer ranging from 1 to 3, and

M ~~consists~~ is selected from the group consisting of Mo and W; ~~or~~ W.

b) filtering and separating ~~the sulfur produced~~ resulting from said contacting wherein said ~~due to the oxidizing effect of the trivalent iron which~~ is reduced to bivalent iron;

c) re-oxidizing ~~the~~ said bivalent iron to trivalent iron with a gaseous stream ~~containing~~ comprising oxygen; and

d) recycling ~~the~~ a solution ~~containing~~ comprising trivalent iron and the hetero polyacid to step a). ~~the oxidation (a).~~

Claim 2 (Currently Amended): The process according to claim 1, wherein the hetero polyacid is ~~used in a~~ in the form of a water insoluble solid form insoluble in water, selected from, formed by:

partial or complete salificating with a metal to form an insoluble salt ~~salification with metals, whose salts are insoluble, wherein said metal is~~ selected from the group consisting of cesium, ammonium, potassium, silver and thallium(I);

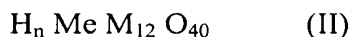
laying and ~~immobilization~~ immobilizing on silica;

laying and ~~immobilization~~ immobilizing on mesoporous molecular sieves, ~~such as~~ HMS and MCM-41; and

laying and ~~immobilization~~ immobilizing on activated carbon.

Claim 3 (Currently Amended): A process for the oxidation of hydrogen sulfide, comprising:

a₁) contacting a gas ~~containing~~ comprising H₂S with an aqueous acid solution ~~containing~~ comprising a hetero polyacid having redox properties, as such or partially salified, with an alkaline metal or with ammonium, said polyacid represented by selected from those ~~having general~~ formula (II):



wherein

n is an integer ~~integer~~, ranging from 2 to 7,

Me is selected from the group consisting of Fe, Co, Mn, Cu, and Cr, and

whereas

M ~~consists~~ is selected from the group consisting of Mo and W; ~~or~~ W.

b₁) filtering and separating ~~the sulfur produced~~ resulting from said contacting wherein said ~~due to the oxidizing effect of the element Me which~~ is reduced;

c₁) re-oxidizing the element Me with a gaseous stream ~~containing~~ comprising oxygen to form a re-oxidized solution; and

d₁) recycling the re-oxidized solution to step a), ~~the oxidation step (a)~~.

Claim 4 (Original): The process according to claim 1, wherein the trivalent iron is present as a salt of an inorganic acid.

Claim 5 (Currently Amended): The process according to claim 4, wherein the acid is selected from the group consisting of nitric acid, sulfuric acid, and phosphoric acid.

Claim 6 (Previously Presented): The process according to claim 1, wherein the trivalent iron is present in the solution in concentrations ranging from 0.01 to 10 moles/l.

Claim 7 (Original): The process according to claim 1, wherein the hetero polyacid compound (I) is present in concentrations ranging from 0.01 to 0.3 moles/l.

Claim 8 (Previously Presented): The process according to claim 6, wherein the molar ratio hetero polyacid compound (I)/trivalent iron ranges from 1/1 to 1/30.

Claim 9 (Original): The process according to claim 3, wherein the hetero polyacid compound (II) is present in concentrations ranging from 0.01 to 0.3 moles/l.

Claim 10 (Previously Presented): The- process according to claim 1, wherein the aqueous acid solution has a pH ranging from 0 to 6.

Claim 11 (Currently Amended): The process according to claim 1, wherein the hydrogen sulfide is present in the gas ~~fed~~ in a concentration ranging from 0.1 to 30% by volume, the remaining percentage consisting of a gas which is inert under the reaction conditions.

Claim 12 (Original): The process according to claim 11, wherein the inert gas is methane gas or natural gas.

Claim 13 (Currently Amended): The process according to claim 1, wherein the re-oxidation step takes place at a temperature ranging from 20 to 100°C and at a pressure greater than or equal to atmospheric pressure ~~or a value slightly higher than atmospheric pressure~~.

Claim 14 (Currently Amended): The process according to claim 1, wherein ~~the~~ said gaseous stream ~~containing oxygen consists of~~ comprises air, oxygen-enriched air, or oxygen.